

Appl. No. 10/621,724
Amdt. dated April 29, 2005
Reply to Office Action of December 2, 2004

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-3 (cancelled).

Claim 4 (currently amended): A lower back stretching apparatus [as recited in claim 3,] comprising:

a padded, waist-high bench comprising:

a horizontal forward portion adapted to support a user's prone upper torso, wherein the forward portion is comprised of:

a generally flat, rectangular, horizontal, padded element having an upper surface, an opposite lower surface, a front end, a rear end, and two opposite sides interconnecting the front end with the rear end, said front end and rear end defining a front portion longitudinal axis;

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four vertical support legs attached to the padded element lower surface, two of which vertical legs are front legs attached near to the element front end, one each near to each opposite side, and two of which vertical legs are rear legs attached near to the element rear end, one each near to each opposite side.

a pivotable rearward portion adapted to support a user's legs, wherein the rearward portion is comprised of:

a generally flat, rectangular, horizontal, padded element having an upper surface, an opposite lower surface, a front end, a rear end, and two opposite sides interconnecting the front end with the rear end, said front end and rear end defining a rearward portion longitudinal axis;

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two leg holders mounted on the rearward portion element upper surface near to the rearward portion rear end, said holders adapted to removably grip a pair of user legs during a stretching procedure;

an elongated, hollow support bar attached longitudinally to the rearward portion lower surface, said support bar having a longitudinal axis parallel to the longitudinal axis of the rearward portion, said support bar having a row of apertures along a bar side.

a crank mechanism interconnecting the forward portion and the rearward portion, said crank mechanism adapted to pivot the rearward portion from a zero degree horizontal position through a forty-five degree downward and rearward tilted position, wherein the crank mechanism is comprised of:

a support cross-bar attached to the two rear support legs of the forward portion;

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an elongated crank lever pivotally attached to
the support cross-bar, said crank lever
comprising:

a forward portion in front of the support
cross-bar, said crank lever forward
portion terminating in a Y-shaped
element having two element ends,
each said element end terminating in
a hand grip positioned to the
forward portion padded element
sides;

a rearward portion to the rear of the
support cross-bar, said crank lever
rearward portion terminating in a U-
shaped element having apertures
formed along its sides, said U-
shaped element adapted to fit about
the rearward portion support bar,
wherein the U-shaped apertures are
aligned with the support bar
apertures;

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a center section rotatably attached to
the support cross-bar;
an elongated removable pin adapted
for joining the U-shaped element and
the support bar together, said
elongated pin adapted for removable
attachment through the U-shaped
element apertures and support bar
apertures;

a damper piston interconnecting the
forward portion rear end with the
crank mechanism rearward portion.

Claim 5 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 4,
wherein:

said vertical support legs are vertically adjustable.

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Claim 6 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 5,
wherein:

said leg holders are adjustable along an axis
perpendicular to a rearward portion padded element
upper surface plane;

wherein a spring loaded button protruding through a
select hole formed in a vertical telescoping
support bar enables the leg holders to be adjusted
closer or farther from the padded element upper
surface.

Claim 7 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 6,
further comprising:

a spring-loaded, pivotable vertical locking bar attached
to the forward portion padded element lower surface
and adapted for engagement with the crank mechanism
crank lever forward portion, said locking bar is
adapted to hold the crank lever in position wherein
the rearward portion is in a full horizontal
position;

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a holder mounted on the crank lever adapted for
removably seating the locking bar in place;

a second holder attached to the forward portion padded
element lower surface adapted for engaging the
spring-loaded locking bar.

Claim 8 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 7,
further comprising:

a hook element rotatably attached to each rear support
leg;

a laterally protruding bar attached to each side of the
crank mechanism forward portion near to the cross
bar, each laterally protruding bar terminating in a
half-ring element;

wherein each hook element is adapted to engage a half-
ring element.

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Claim 9 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 8,
further comprising:

a plurality of bottom prongs on the locking bar adapted
to engage said crank lever holder and said second
holder.